

Further Reading

BEYOND GEOGRAPHY
BRAZIL: War Against Children
BRIDGES OF RESPECT: Creating support for Gay and Lesbian Youth
CENTURIES OF CHILDHOOD
CHANGING CHILDHOOD

CHILDREN AND FEMINISM

CHILDREN IN SOCIETY: A Libertarian Critique
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS HANDBOOK
CITY LINES Poems by London School Students
CLASSROOMS OF RESISTANCE
FOR YOUR OWN GOOD: Hidden Roots of Cruelty in Childrearing
FREEDOM IN EDUCATION: A Do-It yourself guide to the liberation of learning
GIRLS ARE POWERFUL
GROWING UP DEAD
IRIGOBERTA MENCHU An Indian Woman in Guatemala
MODEL CHILDHOOD
NIGHTVISIONS: Illuminating Class and War

NO MASTER HIGH OR LOW: Libertarian Education in Britain 1890-1990

ONE TEENAGER IN TEN
OUR LIVES Young People's Autobiographies
REAL LIVES: Eleven Teenagers Who Don't Go to School

RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL
SAVAGE INEQUALITIES: Children in America's Schools

SOMETHING TO TELL YOU

SUMMERHILL
TEENAGE LIBERATION HANDBOOK: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life
TESTIMONIES
THE CHILDREN OF SOWETO

THE HORNY TEENAGER'S GUIDE TO SEX
THE HUMAN CYCLE
THE LITTLE PRINCE

THE NEXT GENERATION Lives of Third World Children

THE POLITICS OF CHILDHOOD
THE WHITE LION EXPERIENCE
THOU SHALT NOT BE AWARE: Society's Betrayal of the Child
TRUE TO LIFE: WRITINGS BY YOUNG WOMEN
WHEN A CHILD KILLS

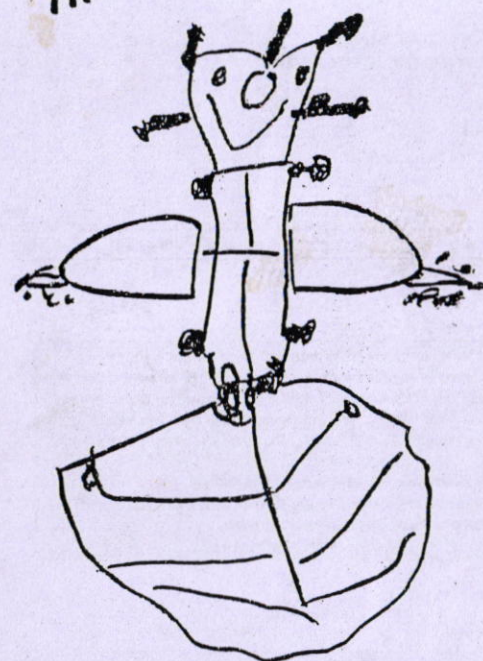
YOUNG, GAY AND PROUD!

For a more complete bibliography or contact list, write to Syndicat des Elèves at the address at the beginning of this pamphlet.

Frederick Turner . Viking
Monthly Review Press
American Friends Service Committee
Philippe Ariès . Vintage
Martin Hoyle ed. Writers & Readers
MacKay, Nagler & Wallace
Lesbian and Feminist Mothers' Political Action Group
Freedom Press
Youth Liberation Press
Ilea English Centre
Chris Searle ed.
Alice Miller
Libertarian Education, ed.
Libertarian Education (UK)
Susan Hemmings ed. Sheba
Brenda Rabkin . Abingdon
R. Menchu . Verso
Christa Wolf
Vagabond Press

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Grace Llewellyn editor .
Lowry House
Celia Haig Brown . Pulp
Jonathon Kozol . Crown
Publishers
London Lesbian and Gay Teenage Group
A.S. Neill
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Sarah Holmes ed. Alyson
Mbulelo Mzamane
Longman
P. Bragg Inc.
Colin Turnbull . Paladin
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
Paladin
Judith Ennew & Brian Milne
New Society Publishers
Martin Hoyle
Nigel Wright . LibEd
Alice Miller . Pluto
Susan Hemmings ed. Sheba
Paul Mones . POB 5701
Santa Monica . CA . 90405
USA
Alyson Publishers

AS SOON AS YOU'RE BORN
THEY MAKE YOU FEEL SMALL



Self Determination for Children

What's Inside

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Cover drawing by Irene: the author in the bath

This pamphlet was originally written and produced in London, England in 1986. Some of the factual information is therefore out of date. It is part of an on-going preoccupation with children's oppression, starting from my own experience. I am interested in receiving writings by and about children and young people. As well, any feedback on the pamphlet is always welcome.

I would like to acknowledge the following who helped with the production: Margaret, Kate, Diane, Sarah, Rachel and Sue. Also, many thanks to Karl who has made this reprinting possible.

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School Students Charter

The rights of school students in British schools are restricted in very many unnecessary ways. For this reason the National Union of School Students has decided to launch a school students charter calling for the abolition of the five major infringements of our rights.

1. No Corporal Punishment!

Children are the only people in Britain who are legally be assaulted. Corporal punishment is barbaric and hypocritical and has been abolished in the armed forces, prisons and nearly every other European country, yet today it is still used in 80% of our schools. It is not an effective deterrent since the same people always receive it, but worsens school discipline by encouraging acceptance of the idea of violence and harming teacher-pupil relationships.

2. No School Uniform!

School uniform does not cover up class differences but makes them more obvious because with the high cost of school uniforms today it is always possible to tell who can afford a new blouse and who has to make do with an old, tatty one. Most school uniforms are so similar that they encourage a feeling of identification with the school. British school students, like those in Europe, should be allowed to decide their own appearance.

3. No Petty Rules!

There are a lot from school to school but include such things as being forced to tell teachers or, miss or madam, having to stand up when the head enters the room, school rules forbidding using the canteen on the way to and from school and so on. There is one thing common to all of them—they are all petty. They serve no useful purpose, but merely antagonise school students and waste teachers' time and energy.

4. No Prefects!

There are many schools in which older pupils have the power to punish or order about younger ones. We are not opposed to school students helping out with the running of the school—in fact, we welcome it very much, but the prefect system is divisive, elitist and because they are appointed by the head and not elected, undemocratic.

5. No Secret Files!

Because these files cannot be seen by the people who they are about, they may often contain material which is damaging but untrue, which the subject of the secret file could correct if he or she knew what was in it. So mistakes, caused in a moment of madness or incompetence, can be copied again and again for years. The keeping of secret files is unfair, dangerous and should be stopped.

The National Union of School Students was set up in 1972 to give school students more say over the way schools are run, and to make them better places for ourselves. Just about everything in schools is decided for us, but we have our opinions of school life and they should be listened to and acted upon. We have started this campaign to win for school students the rights we feel we are entitled to. If you want more information about NUSS or want to join us, write to NUSS, 302 Pensacola Road, NI. (Tel: 01-278 3291 Extension 24).

LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH MOVEMENT is an organisation of lesbians and gays under 26. We have no lower age limit. We are a network of young lesbians and gays throughout England and Wales and Scotland. We run a penfriend scheme, a phoneline, and an information service on law, health, housing, benefits. We organise a yearly Festival, a Summer Camp, and some one-off events. We encourage new self-run lesbian & gay youth groups. We produce this magazine & other propaganda, and we further our aims by direct action. We support the struggles of lesbians and gays, children and youth, women, Black people, pedophiles, transsexuals, the working class, the unwaged, people under occupation by a foreign power, and every sort of sexual deviant!

YOUTH WELL-THOUGHT PROGRAM

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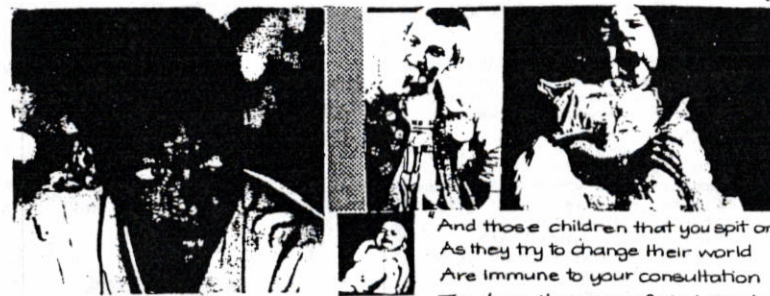
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And those children that you spit on
As they try to change their world
Are immune to your consultation
They're quite aware of what they're
going through

WHO IS A CHILD?

The word child usually means someone who has not yet reached puberty. In this pamphlet I'm using it to mean any one who is under 18 years of age and is therefore, legally considered to be a 'minor'. I use other words such as teenager, adolescent, young child, infant, baby and young person, both to refer to more specific age groupings and to add variety. Clearly there are significant differences between, for example, the experience of a young child and that of a teenager, which cannot all be explored in the space available. Age distinctions are also of great importance to children; the older you get the closer you are to being an adult, no longer 'just a child'. However, there are common experiences, problems and restrictions for all people under 18 years of age, which override the differences, since, in our culture, it is the division between adults and children which is at the heart of a society deeply divided by age.

I really look forward to growing up so I can go to parties and discos and things and get in late at night. It's silly not allowing children to swear, in fact adults sometimes swear at children because they've been swearing.



The worst thing about being a child is that you just can't go and do what you want to do, like joining some expedition. You always have to be over 18, it doesn't seem fair. And there are some jobs you don't need to learn lots of things for.

As soon as you're born
They make you feel small
John Lennon

In the course of this life I have had a great many encounters with a great many people who have been concerned with matters of consequence. I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

A. de Saint-Exupéry

► IS IT ALWAYS LIKE THIS ?

There are and have been places in the world where children are not hit or threatened, where children are welcomed as new members of the community, where they have a place, not separate from, but integral to that community and where differences of size, experience and ability are not grounds for being powerless or unimportant.

Such places are not to be found in western industrial society but exist in the ever shrinking margins of what is called civilisation. They are the homes of people who we call 'primitives' and their way of life is under threat. The people of the Amazonian rain forests are one such example. Those of you who saw the film "The Emerald Rain Forest" will remember that these forests are being decimated in the interests of local elites and multinationals to make way for 'progress' like massive power dams.



The destruction of their home is being accompanied by enforced 'civilization' and all the benefits it brings: disease, alcoholism, poverty, foreign christian morality. Along with these comes acclimatisation to levels of violence hitherto unknown, let alone imagined, and the idea that wielding power-over-others is natural, human and inevitable. Such violence is internalised as well; self-repression and denial of the body are the other stigmas of civilisation, inseparable from the concepts of sin and guilt.

"When a child is 40 days old, there are more speeches, more promises on her/his behalf, and he becomes a full member of the community"

R. Menchú
a Guatemalan Indian Woman



In the 'secular' west we still behave very much in accordance with the christian idea that children are 'born in sin' and must be moulded and tamed into good citizens. If many of us no longer call it sin, it goes by other names like instinct which imply, that without adult discipline and instruction, children would be 'wild', selfish and anti-social. I began by refering to cultures where children are not perceived as 'demons' to be controlled, in order to raise some questions about children's status in this society.

"Violence is not an instinct. It isn't pressure that comes from within that has to be released. It is a cultural style."

J. Spiegel, Lumburg Centre for the Study of Violence.



MEDIA ADULTERATION

The media normally distorts children's activities and protests. Youth must be seen as helpless and impressionable; the common assumption is that they have been influenced, even brain-washed by adults. This was seen clearly in last year's students strike and is always suggested when children are involved in militant armed resistance.



Many Guatemalan Indian children who have witnessed the torture and death of family and community members, decide to join the guerillas fighting the dictatorship. It is the experience of brutality and injustice which has brought about their commitment to combat the violence. Yet western journalists in this and countless other situations speculate about the psychological effects on children who take up arms. They seem to prefer that children suffer the trauma as passive victims rather than respond actively. Again it is the image of the active, self-motivated child which is threatening.

"My little sister had opted for the armed struggle; she was 8 when she joined the guerrillas."

R. Menchú

CHILDREN IN CHARGE

For adults who wish to work with children in order to question and change the conditions of children's lives, many contradictions arise. Individual adults cannot divest themselves of the social and economic power which adulthood confers on them. It cannot be wished away. It is essential for them to respect the need for children to organise independently, to make their own decisions.

Because of the legal and economic disadvantages which children suffer, adults can be useful in providing support and resources in these areas. Adults must not speak in the place of children. But conflicts are inevitable. Adults can also work at deconstructing and uncovering their own childhood experiences, as well as challenging the attitudes and behaviour of other adults. Breaking down the categories of child and adult is a useful strategy for change.

My Powered Chair

The first time that I got my powered chair home, I could not believe it. When I brought the powered chair up the road one of my friends said, 'This is the first time that I don't have to wheel your wheelchair up and down the road in ten years.' I felt funny when she said that. I am able to bring myself to the shop with the powered chair.

We need to envision a whole array of strategies which will empower children, which will afford a new basis for relationships between adults and children. Equality could incorporate difference rather than the insistence we all be the same before we can have access to the same rights and considerations. Here are some beginnings:



As well, there are many small, 'invisible' battles which children fight to preserve their integrity and challenge the limitations/restrictions placed upon their lives.

Kinnock rebukes 'dafties' behind striking pupils

White Flakes

Will there ever be the final solitude?
that sound that rumbles our ears, rings out
with bursts of light,
the sky is pink with the glowing death,
or is it our blood-drowned eyes
so weak, they sleep in our sockets
some dead.

The man on the wooden box, told us
we would survive;
we listened to this last stranger in
pathetic obedience.

The hours are long gone,
the flash was a blood stain
that dripped for a moment;
and now it's beginning to snow
white flakes,
but it's summer.

Anthony King

Hearn they have not
 Me MacGreeger can't you see
 That we're not so greedy
 But we want to save our pit
 But you won't give us just one little bit
 You take our food but take our money
 While you sit at NO 10 drinking champagne and eating honey.
 Christmas is near but we're not fat
 We're fast out the good new year
 We're young and we're strong
 We're a little bit different
 The blue scouts stand steady and true
 The blue scouts stand steady on
 We'll fight and die and stand to the last
 Until the pickets are stopped being harassed

Jason Stewart, 7, Yorkshire

Why are so many of adults efforts dictated towards control and punishment? Why are children so excluded from public places? Perceived as nuisances and burdens? Why do adults forget so much of the pain and humiliation they endured as children? Why are all the words associated with childhood and youth, negative in meaning, synonyms for incomplete, irrational, insignificant, unsupplemented, selfish and so on? The phrase 'to be treated as a child' clearly means to be ignored, humiliated, patronised, to be seen as less of a person.

Children

must learn 'restraint'

For those who are inside a culture brought up to accept its ways, natural and proper, it is very difficult to imagine ways in which it might or should be different. When white Europeans came to North America, the indigenous people often thought that white parents did not love or value their children because they hit and beat them. In the near annihilation of the Native culture which followed the 'discovery' of the continent, this perspective has been lost: both that of the outsider looking in and that of a culture which does not employ coercion and violence towards children.

Perhaps the most distressing to the tribes were calculated efforts to turn their children from the traditional ways. These efforts were called "educating the children for citizenship." The children were forcibly taken to far places where many sickened and died, or committed suicide or ran away to places where their pride was cruelly broken on inflexible rules and alien standards." F. Turner

F. Turner
on Native Americans

Although this pamphlet is about childhood in the west, I will be drawing on material from non western countries in order to point to ways in which childhood can be/is different and to undermine ideas about its 'naturalness'.

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It has become cliché to remark on the level of violence in society. In all areas. During the last year in Britain the media has focused on the deaths of many children ranging in age from a few months to their teens. Some were kidnapped, abused and murdered by strangers, while others and this is by far the greater number, died at the hands of their parents or 'carers' (the NSPCC estimates as many as 3 children die weekly within the family). Several boys have recently committed suicide while confined to borstals practicing the 'short, sharp, shock' treatment. Corporal punishment is still used in many British schools; STOPP, the organisation committed to abolishing it, has recorded many instances of serious assaults on pupils by teachers.

While children's and teenagers' sexuality is closely regulated, often forbidden and repressed, adult men consume vast amounts of child pornography. The profits from this amount to at least 40% of the total for the entire industry. The numbers of children exploited in the production of pornography - films, videos, pictures - is vast, amounting to at least two million + children per year.

While those 21 and under are excluded from wage councils and working alone are not protected by minimum wage legislation, many employers prefer to hire young people at pay levels on a par with pocket money, rather than salaries. Is it surprising then that more and more young people turn to prostitution? Many of those who have been abused and humiliated at home or 'in care' are to be found surviving this way in the streets.

Under 21s

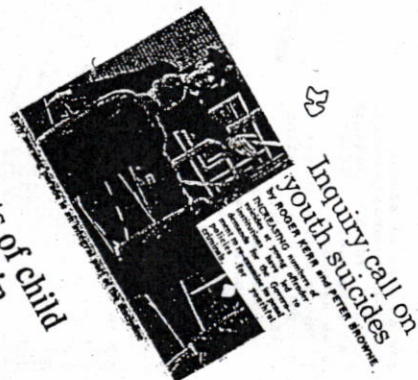
excluded

By Jane McLaughlin
The Labour Party's general election manifesto has promised to set up a system to exclude under 21s.

Dying for a job

In the last four years 22 young people have been killed and 100 suffered amputations while on government youth training schemes. Quentin Mitchell looks at the shocking cost of cheap labour.

The cruel facts of child abuse in Britain



It is still possible to believe that crimes against children are aberrations and name the 'villains': psychotic monsters, 'subnormal' or deprived parents, perverse teachers and youth workers, lazy social workers, unscrupulous profiteers. By marginalizing the evil ones, adults protect themselves from uncomfortable questions and memories, refuse to see the connections between these crimes and the general condition of all children's lives. After all, isn't this a 'child-centred', 'permissive' society? Aren't western children the best fed and housed, with access to the best educational opportunities and health care?

Whether you think these statements are true or not, they do not necessarily mean that our culture likes or respects children, nor that children are content or happy within the environment constructed 'for' them.

SOUTH AFRICA



"We have a funeral every weekend"
Pupils say one school for all



Youth organise against Kwanabe
"We are building the future now"

Leave the youth alone says chief
The National Youth Council of South Africa has issued a statement saying that the youth should be left alone to build their own future.

Youths challenge white farms
In South Africa children and youth are at the very heart of the resistance. In 1976 in Soweto, their protest against the teaching of Afrikaans in their schools, erupted into mass protest against apartheid and thousands of children were killed. Today in South Africa they organize boycotts of schools, of white businesses. In Port Alfred they run street committees which replace the racist municipal organisation. When funerals take place it is to ensure maximum attendance. They display impressive discipline and organisational skills. Many children cannot return home because they are police targets and must effectively live underground.

Children in South Africa are detained, tortured and murdered because they are at the centre of the anti-apartheid movement, not because they are accidental victims of widespread police and army violence.



RESISTANCE



Children, young people, the world over, are involved in collective and individual acts of resistance, and struggles for change. They are not merely victims who suffer passively, but people who rebel, subvert and negotiate a space for themselves within their social positions as children. They are participants in many national liberation struggles, in campaigns concerning their own particular issues and in relationships with individual adults.

Where ever you find movements for national liberation, opposition to colonialism, dictatorship and fascism, you will find children involved, from an early age. In the Spanish Civil War they were active and under Franco's regime the legal age of torture was 14. In Nicaragua, the majority of those killed in the fight to topple the Somoza dictatorship were under 20. In Algeria they were message carriers, decoys and ammunition runners.

In Uganda, Eritrea, Guatemala and countless other places you will find them actively involved. In Chile last year a sit in by 500 school girls (aged upward from 6 years old) to protest against Pinochet, the dictator, resulted in their mass arrest, detainment and sexual harassment.



Children in Santiago protest riot

From Nicaragua
Hundreds of schoolchildren hurled stones at riot police and lit barriers of burning petrol. The children were seen in demonstration to mark the murder 2 years ago of a teacher's leader and two other victims of a pro-government death squad.

Any day of the week it is possible to see children being threatened, slapped, insulted, dragged along, pushed resisting into pushchairs, handled like cute dolls of talked about in their presence as though they didn't exist or didn't have feelings. Often there are signs in shops excluding school children and they are generally barred from places where alcohol is sold. It is an unspoken assumption that children can be ignored and overruled, that they should give way, that adults have priority.

It is useful to compare the interactions between adults, to those between children, and adults. Adults talk with each other, in ways which usually involve respect, equality, being taken seriously. An adult talking with a child is more likely talking at or down to her/him, and their voice will often assume a patronising or authoritarian tone. Children in the presence of adults can be ignored, told to stop interfering. Children who talk back or just want to engage on an equal level are cheeky, rude, disobedient.



If you believe as I do, that it is the experience of childhood which shape and limit an individual in decisive ways, then many things are seriously wrong with children's lives today. We all have our first encounter with the world as children yet, for so many adults their childhood experience is vague and piecemeal, summed up by general statements such as a 'happy' or 'deprived' childhood, as though the experience could be categorised and put away. The complexity of feeling and experience is reduced to pat phrases. The first five years is all but lost to memory: a few fragments remain, elusive and shadowy like dreams.



If adults are willing to look at what actually happens to children rather than what is said about them: the way they are treated without respect, the expectations that they be obedient, good, manageable, the degrading stereotypes of children which are reflected in language, images, in toys and entertainment - they will find a childhood which is neither 'carefree' nor 'joyful', but rife with humiliations, lack of recognition and the suppression of creative and sensual drives. If adults were willing to listen to the criticisms, objections and opinions of children, or to their very telling silences, might they not find echoes of their own 'lost years'?



And for children, it is perhaps more difficult to question the edifice of childhood; as children, we are painfully dependent on adults and have integrated the values of being good, obedient and child-like. It is so often the only path to approval and survival.

But resistance does occur in small, invisible ways and often collectively, visibly. Such resistances are renamed delinquency, hyperactivity, naughtiness, deviancy, children are sometimes subjected to 'treatment' and punishment for these 'disorders'. These remainings need not blind us, if adults are attentive to both the child within them and to the voices of children everywhere.

6 GIRLS AND BOYS

This pamphlet is addressing the experience of childhood, shared by both sexes in western society. All cultures create distinctions between girls and boys, in addition to the purely biological. Thus they have different and shared experiences. The degree and importance of gender-based differences varies enormously amongst cultures and races, in addition to economic systems, family structures and so on. In the west, expectations of what a girl and a boy 'should' be are distinguished according to the prevailing notions of femininity and masculinity.

Feminism has addressed the problem of sexual stereotyping, particularly how it affects girls, by limiting the scope of their activities and potential and encouraging them to behave in 'feminine' ways which undermine their self confidence. Boys are inclined to be competitive, aggressive, and to pursue 'masculine' interests. They should repress feelings of hurt, fear and tenderness and despise behaviour which is identified as feminine.



Preparing to be a Beautiful Lady

At 10 years of age, Christine, 11, has been told that the way to be a 'beautiful lady' is to be a 'beautiful lady'.

PEARS SOAP



"I put it in a few more years before they find out they're the weaker sex!"

'Girls are conditioned' to fail at maths

Not only do individual boys and girls suffer from these pressures, but relationships between girls and boys are adversely affected. Sexual stereotyping is also essential to the future positions children will take up as adults in a male dominated society.

Thus an awareness of gender differentiation is crucial and positive, when it has an enabling effect i.e. by encouraging children to challenge and step out of the roles prescribed for them. The danger, which is true of all approaches, is that they will perpetuate adult needs to mould children. Thus, without a general understanding of the common oppression which girls and boys suffer, anti-sexist approaches can be seriously flawed.

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Teenage rebellion is accepted by most people as natural and inevitable. Adolescence is seen as a time when new sexual desires and potency contribute to confusions, intense feelings and disaffections. Teenage sexuality is a danger to be contained until teenagers are 'mature enough' to handle it appropriately. The age of consent is 16 for heterosexual relations and 21 for homosexual. But does puberty really explain the violence and self-destructiveness which are associated with adolescence?

The idea that youth must reject the older generation in order to assume its own identity promotes a view of society which is, of necessity, conflictual, which sees different age groups in an antagonistic relationship. Is it not possible that the rebellion of youth is a reflection of imposed dependencies and constraints, of a legitimate desire to be free from adult control? The contradictions of childhood become more intense as children grow older. The minor privileges and freedoms which they acquire as adolescents do not compensate for the limitations, lack of choice and economic dependency.

If society were to accept that school is not everyone's cup of tea, that family life is often antagonistic, that parents and children often do not get along, then new possibilities could emerge. The fact that school is compulsory means that, outside it, there is no provision for young people. Were they free to channel and utilize their own energies and ideas, this would have positive and creative consequences for everyone.

Technology school plan for young elite

Put it this way. When you go to secondary school, right? you all start off the cattle... put into little groups and all that bullsh*t on your first day, and there's all this military type basis in school. And they hit the living daylight out of you your first time there.



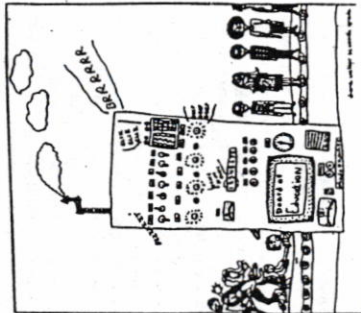
"Adolescents' 'heroic willingness' to fight one another in wars and (just as life is beginning!) to die for someone else's cause may be a result of the fact that during puberty the worded-off hatred from early childhood becomes reinforced. Adolescents can divert this hatred from their parents if they are given a clear-cut enemy whom they are permitted to hate freely and with impunity."

A. Miller

The 'battle of the generations' is not inevitable: it is a reflection of grossly unequal relationships between adults and children, of unnecessary dependencies. If these are perpetuated they will only result in more violence and intergenerational conflict. It is necessary to look at how social/ economic/ political/ environmental changes can empower children and relieve adults of onerous responsibilities. While this is not on the purpose of this pamphlet, we can look at how children themselves are struggling, contesting and what constitute some of their demands for change.

DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH

The 'preparation for life' which takes place in schools is, unfortunately, just that. Young people acquire the attributes and skills necessary for the work place: acclimatization to routine, to physical restraint, the ability to take orders, the development of 'correct' thinking processes, the suppression of criticism and curiosity. The content of school curricula is far from neutral or objective and conveys, in general, values which reflect and seek to maintain the status quo.



**Boy hit by teacher
awarded £700**

**Caning in
schools
gets a**

year's grace

By David Hackett,
Westminster Correspondent
Brian's schools for another
year while head teachers decide
Department of Education an-
nounced yesterday. The decision
comes after the House of Com-
mons voted on Tuesday by a majority of
ment.

Student councils in secondary schools are in fact supervised by adults, and promote a kind of sham democracy, not unlike that which exists in government. These councils have no significant say in the running of the school, because this would be unacceptable to the adults in charge. Parents are consulted, if minimally, and elect the educational boards, yet those who are most intimately concerned, the students, have no real voice, no power.

Students who don't conform, who rebel in different ways are subject to sanctions and punishments. Extra homework, detentions, suspensions, withdrawal of privileges are commonplace. Corporal punishment is still legal in this country; the sadistic belief that assault results in good behavior, that violence will curb violence, is still prevalent. (Sweden has, since 1979, outlawed all forms of corporal punishment, in homes as well as in schools). In addition, students can be subject to 'therapeutic' treatments from psychologists or psychiatrists, when they are thought to be maladjusted or suffering from some form of psychic disorder.

Of course, a sympathetic specialist or teacher can be receptive to children's problems without categorizing them. Never the less, treatment is usually intended to 'help the student adjust to the situation', not to change it. Students who are repeatedly disruptive, violent, 'unmanageable' or truant can be expelled. If no other school will accept them and their parents cannot cope, then alternative institutions will absorb them: borstals, children's homes, foster placements, psychiatric units.



WHAT'S IN A THEORY?



When I began writing this pamphlet, I assumed that the ideal starting point for each reader would be their own experience of childhood. This has been my own starting point. I have no desire to impose my own 'theory of childhood' on individual experience. When faced with generalisations, we may reject them out of a legitimate fear of being 'slotted into' a framework, that our individual experience will be denied validity. Since this is one of the common experiences of childhood, it would be rather ironic if I were

to construct a single correct version of western childhood.

Each of us have unique experiences distinguished by gender, race, class, ability, culture, family, sexual orientation and so much more. These are the other components of identity and experience which influence each person's childhood. I have titled the following sections the 'tool box', in the hope that it will be both versatile and usable. The tools are the elements which comprise the overall portrait of childhood. These elements can never be pieced together into a coherent and tidy whole because reality is not like that; it varies from moment to moment, from person to person. This is not meant to deny the existence of a system of childhood, which is maintained by legal, social and economic means, as well as by adult chauvinism. It should be possible to seek out common ground, based on a recognition of difference



» Adult-Child

PAUL'S GOSPEL

It is commonly held that when a person becomes a adult, they must "put away childish things" as did Saint Paul when he "became a man". Graduating into adulthood implies, on the one hand, the assumption of a set of characteristics which are not manifested in childhood and, on the other, a rejection of behaviour and desires thought to be childish i.e. undesirable. The ideal adult is responsible, consistent, rational, controlled, mature, aware of others. They are providers, carers, breadwinners. They possess experience and foresight. They are independent. Children, on the other hand, are associated with a very different image: they are selfish, irrational, irresponsible, immature, dependent and needy.

By the time they enter adolescence and youth.... Most children have learned the major values that mitigate against aggressivity and violence.... They carry these values with them throughout life, they do not put away childish things" *Turnbull*

Rogett's thesaurus cites the following synonyms (words with a similar meaning) for infant, child, youth etc.: ignorant, incomplete, defective, senile, backward, callow, credulous, unsophisticated, simple-minded, unimportant, trifling and naive. The only positive quality listed was trusting i.e. being without suspicion. Skill and intelligence are referred to as exceptional eg. child prodigy, gifted child. The word youngster had the following associations: 1) young animals eg. puppy 2) smallness, littleness 3) expressions like urchin, brat, little bugger, spoiled, holy terror 4) sexual references to girls: nymphet, virgin, piece, boyden 5) cutesy words like darling, cherub.



Kohl throws a party to show love of children

From Alan Francis
The American Psychologist, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1975, pp. 1-10. The author, a psychologist, describes how he has organized a party for children in his home. The party is held every year and is a great success. The author describes the party in detail, including the food, the games, and the activities. He also discusses the importance of children's parties and how they can be organized.

Perhaps dictionary references wouldn't be so significant if every-day language didn't reaffirm them: "don't treat me like a child", "now juvenile", "why don't you grow up" etc. To be called childish or adolescent is humiliating and insulting, not only for adults; children also refer to those younger than themselves as "only babies", "just kids". And it is not only verbally that children are portrayed as lacking and insignificant. Visual media and advertising continually project images of children as cute playthings, not to be taken seriously. Political parties, of all colours, exploit the so called needs of children whom they portray as weak, helpless and in need of their intervention. Just look around: t.v. billboards, film, advertising, newspapers. Where can we see children portrayed as strong, resourceful, caring or intelligent?

FORCE FED

What exactly do we mean by learning? Many people believe that if children were not 'forced' to, they would learn nothing, be lazy and apathetic. This is, in fact, the model of the child or adult whose drive and curiosity have been crushed, rather than stimulated, by school and/or their home environment. Anyone who is or spends time with a young child, knows they need no stimulation.

But in school children must follow the adults agenda. They have no choice but to go, since it is compulsory, and practically no say about what, when or how they study. Tests and exams assess how well they can reproduce facts and ideas which may not interest them and with which they may disagree. In the classroom they must obey the teacher and compete with other students. How can this situation foster real debate and learning? No one can be 'taught' how to think, or indeed needs to be. They can be given access to information and provided with a supportive atmosphere. They will do the thinking themselves.

TEACH YOURSELF



The numerous experimental schools such as Summerhill (established in England since 1923) of the late 19th and early 20th centuries have consistently discredited the belief that children must be forced to learn. There, children who had not done any formal lessons and decided to pass O or A level requirements were able to achieve this in as little as 2-3 years' time.



Those who had not yet learned to read, but had developed a whole range of skills including the musical, mechanical, artistic and aesthetic, learned to read quickly when this became necessary to gain access to needed information.

What distinguishes many of these alternative schools, is not only the free choice of activity and the absence of competition, but the experience of self-government and responsibility. At Summerhill, the school is run by a weekly General Assembly of students and teachers. Each person has one vote and the chairperson is normally a student they range in age from 5-16. Practical decisions are taken, rules established, disagreements are aired and if necessary, punishments are decided upon.

This is hardly 'running wild'. Rather than waiting for adulthood to be responsible, they are doing it now. It is participation in one's community, in the decisions which affect one's life which fosters respect for collective decisions, for others and for one's own worth, not coercion and submission to other people's rules 'for your own good'.

Violence hits the primary schools

By JUDITH JONES, Education Correspondent
A report on the increasing incidence of violence in primary schools. The article discusses the various forms of violence, from physical fights to bullying, and the impact on children and teachers. It also mentions some measures being taken to address the problem.

» School

Many of those who don't do well in school, do very well in life! Keith Joseph.

School is the place where young people spend the bulk of their time. It is the primary institution of childhood. But it is only in this century that schooling has extended to the entire population, for a minimum of 10-11 years, in most western countries. School is the place where childhood is passed; a child over five years of age is a school-child, a student, a pupil. So close are these two identities that those who don't attend, as for instance many Gypsy children, are seen as aberrations. What place can there be for them outside school? There is a disturbing feeling that such children are out of adult control, that their time is not being suitably organized for them, and they might "turn out badly".

Such attitudes reflect the acceptance of children's marginalization in school, as being necessary and inevitable. Yet it has not been so very long since it was commonplace to see children in public places engaged in a variety of activities.

As I said earlier, schools are a very efficient way of monitoring and directing young people's energy and behavior. They spend long periods seated at desks, their attention focused on a single adult, unable to communicate with each other. They must ask permission even to pee. Bells dictate their movements, even their moments of 'liberty'. They are ordered precisely. Rank and grade predominate: sitting in rows, divided by age, classified by 'intelligence' and constantly being assessed by tests, exams and report cards.

What would you criticize about school - feeling bad?
You have to respect too many teachers which I don't think is right 'cos it makes them feel high and half the teachers treat you like shit anyway.

This then is the context in which 'learning' is to take place. Despite enormous public expenditure for education, more and more students are leaving school, barely literate. There have been swings between liberal and traditional approaches, and currently there are calls from many quarters for more discipline and rigor. There is a feeling that the more money spent, the better education will become. Where the system fails, it must be adjusted, improved. More and more problems are identified: there are children with learning disabilities, those who are hyperactive, maladjusted, educationally subnormal, and under-achievers. And there are more specialists who intervene around these 'problems', more treatments which are developed, like drugs for the 'hyper-active'.

So much has been invested in the idea of school, psychologically as well as economically, that it seems impossible to address the problem of schooling itself. Pre-school children have tremendous amounts of enthusiasm, learn a staggering amount, and acquire many skills. For them, the acquisition of basics like reading, writing and arithmetic should be neither problematic nor lengthy, given the motivation. And yet, it often is problematic, and absurdly time consuming.

Too Much Pressure

Dear LOOT,
I wish to say how right you are Mr. Famous. Too much pressure on us all. I know of an excellent student who is making us all more human. Let there be compulsory education. If no child were forced to start school before 6 and every child had the option to leave at 14, things would improve a lot.

Mr. Brice
Longton

CONDOMA

It's right that there are some things children can't do, like drive a car, because if you get killed you would only have had a short life. But we ought to be able to watch 'Saturday Night Fever' which has an adult certificate because of the bad language, which is mostly used by children. I've heard of people who say 'they'd just grow'.



"DON'T FEEL LIKE AN ADULT"

In conversation, numerous adults have told me they don't 'feel like adults' all the time. At times they experience feelings of helplessness and humiliation which evoke past childhood experiences, and are in contradiction to the 'persona' of the in-control adult. This is interesting to me, because it suggests the realm of the unconscious.

We know that parts of our mental life are normally inaccessible to us. We become aware of the existence of such an unconscious place via dreams and the emerging into consciousness of desires and motivations of which we are not aware. The existence of this unconscious means that much of what we call the personality is influenced by experiences and needs of which we are unaware, and which stretch back to the very beginning of our individual histories. Thus our 'child' experience lives on, (as does last year's and yesterday's).

OPPOSITES

The images of child and adult are polar opposites. Where children lack, adults possess; where children are more trifles, adults are significant. Like all opposites, one does not exist without the other. The concept of femininity doesn't stand by itself; it immediately conjures up that of masculinity; within it is contained the idea of its opposite.

So it is with child and adult. Like all opposites, which only make sense together, they suggest a totality, a unity, which in this case is to be found in the individual. The child becomes the adult; the adult as the child. Together they form a whole human being. Yet what of the rupture, the 'putting away of childish things'? How can this be explained? Quite simply by deception, but one which is constantly reproduced by a social ordering, which maintains separation according to age and adult domination.

The distinctions between adults and children are misleading in so far as they are seen as fixed, as equivalent to a sense of self. The pride of place which our culture grants adults (except the elderly who are often treated like children) is only maintained by the infantilisation of children, by the constant insistence that children be something other than adults (and vice versa). Children are the absence, the invisible prop which constantly reaffirms the substance of adulthood.

This is not to say that it is necessary for adults and children to be physically together for this to be true. It is to the idea of the child and the idea of the adult that I refer, and these are constantly promoted in our culture. Neither am I saying that real adults and children are co-terminous with these ideas, but rather they are symbolic reference points which in part reflect, and in part determine behaviour and real experience.

Not only does the unconscious obscure the dividing line between the child and the adult selves, but it throws into doubt notions of a fixed identity. The adults who often feel like children or the child, 'mature beyond their years' are not maladjusted: they are simply demonstrating the fluidity of human identity. While it is true that adult persons, in our culture, must take up the social position or role of adult (unless age or illness is used to infantilise them) this is nonetheless a *limited* truth because individual human subjects never correspond to the category of adult.

Even though the 'child' experience which adults carry within them, is normally censored out, denied, there are points when they are 'allowed' to emerge. Under the influence of alcohol for instance, or in an intimate relationship (where adults can 'baby' one another'). Thus we have on the one hand a social ordering, determined by age, which prescribes fixed places to both adults and children and, on the other, a sense of self which shifts and changes depending on the circumstances.



OLD FOR YOUR AGE

While it remains the case that people below a certain age must take up a child's position (i.e. they are legal minors, subject to parental authority, obliged to attend school etc) which is socially inferior, children often



exhibit 'adult' qualities of strength, autism, independence, and caring. This can be seen in numerous situations - rendered invisible or rejected as 'unsuitable' - as when children care for other children, or provide understanding and tolerance for needy adults, or manage on their own.

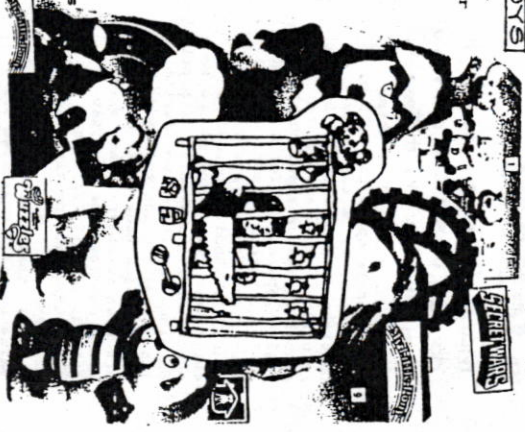
Of course different criteria and expectations come into play to assess child and adult behaviour: the adult who behaves 'childishly' is seen as failing, inadequate. 'Childish' serves as an incitement to reassume control, to contain the undesirable emotions.

Children who behave older than their years are seen as overly serious, precocious or 'deprived' of the irresponsibility which is supposed to be the 'right' of childhood. Or they can be accused of cheekiness, arrogance and put in their place. In this way children are pressed into age-appropriate behaviour. Is it not threatening to see children behave in ways which connote powerfulness, so embedded in our culture is the idea of their powerlessness?

TOYS

Toys are often recommended for particular age groups eg. a puzzle for 2-3 year olds. 'Children's' literature is also classified in this way. Imagine buying a book or record recommended for those between 30-35 years of age. That would be absurd. We recognise that individual interests and capacities change with age, but these are only codified where children are concerned.

Toys have a lot to say about children and to children. They are usually of no practical use, or shoddy non-functional imitations of the real thing. They have a potent ideological content: dolls, Irons and dish sets for girls, space invaders and GI Joes for boys, and racist 'Gollywog' images in books. Games are rich in cultural messages, playing with monopoly money teaches the 'value' of money. Board and quiz games stimulate the spirit of competition. There are always winners and losers. War Games encourage the acceptance of killing and 'necessary' military interventions.



Animals, stuffed or in plastic, are favoured toys for children: not to mention living animals who are given as 'pets'. Children learn from the very beginning, that animals are objects to be used, to satisfy human needs. Zoos are justified by their 'educational' value for children. Seeing uprooted animals in cages is, indeed, highly instructive and reminiscent of the cribs and 'playpens' in which small children are confined, of the fences surrounding schoolyards, of the barred windows in hospitals and mental institutions. Of course, children often use toys in ways which they were not 'meant' to be used. They subvert the intentions of the makers. Toys are used once and then abandoned or broken. Children can sue out a con, as well as anyone. Toys for children, as opposed to toys for just anybody, appear to serve not only ideological, 'instructional' aims, but also to circumscribe the arena of childhood activities. In effect, they are saying to children: concern yourself with the trivial, the futile, the irrelevant and wait till later for the real thing.

Each theory translates into corresponding practices and interventions in real children's lives. These are based on assumptions about children's needs and capabilities, derived from the theoretical material. The writings of Jean Piaget, a child psychologist, have been adapted for use in nurseries and day-care centres. He is also taught in degree programmes for childcare workers. His ideas, for example, on children's intellectual development are used to structure the activities and materials available to children who attend centres influenced by him. These and other institutions also provide facilities for more research into children's 'nature'. As well, the theories are popularized for consumption in the home, primarily by mothers. The theories are often contradictory: what unites them is their treatment of children as objects of study, as creatures who can be known, thus categorized, thus treated 'appropriately'. They contribute not only to adult views of what constitutes a child, a young person, but also to children's self-perception. A two-year-old engaged in an activity which is not 'developmentally appropriate' may be told she is 'too young' or 'too old' to do that, or subtly dissuaded from her efforts.

Children's answers due to personality

Should sex education tell us how to proceed with your sex?

Answers: Yes, because it will help you to know how to use your body. No, because it will tell you how to use your body.

When at school sex education did not touch at all upon pregnancy. There were leaflets and books available on social problems, drug, abortion, contraceptives, VD, but nothing for pregnancy. (Malt, 20)



This is how you will enjoy. Dr. John Gibson demonstrates ideas 'Sexual development' exercises (1940). See Thomson.

Words in their infancy

All children are called 'baby' until they are about 18 months old. After that, they are called 'child' or 'boy' or 'girl'. But in the first 18 months, they are called 'baby'.

The word 'baby' is used to describe a child who is very young and who is still in the process of learning to walk and talk. It is a word that is used to describe a child who is still in the process of learning to walk and talk.

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All advice that pertains to raising children betrays more or less clearly the numerous variously clothed needs of the adult. Fulfillment of these needs not only discourages the child's development but actually prevents it. This also holds true when the adult is honestly convinced of acting in the child's best interests.

A. Miller

Teenagers are barred from seeing 'adult' movies because they contain sex, and cannot legally have heterosexual relationships before 16, yet many are taught sex education which comes from the experts i.e. sexologists and talks about them. The seemingly neutral terrain of science can disguise, not only bias, but also moral attitudes, especially prevalent in the sexual arena.

You may now say "But children and adults are different and there are qualities which are valued in children". Both these are true. Amongst the identifiable differences are the critical dependency of babies who alone could not survive, the physical transformations of puberty, the relative lack of experience in many areas. Yet even these differences are by no means absolute. They are critically affected by the environment and assume varying significance.

I have known babies capable of entertaining themselves for long periods and those who could not be alone at all, without anxiety. Amongst some African nomadic tribes children walk at 7 months old while in the west the 'normal' is one year or more. In Bogota, Columbia thousands of children survive in groups without adults, while in the west even a 15 year old is not legally entitled to live independently, outside of the family or state institutions.

Clearly differences are relative and difference is a fact of life, be it based on age, gender, class, race or whatever. The critical question is how are certain differences used to construct and rationalise social inequality. It is not evident to me that differences in size and experience justify children's inferior status.



The positive qualities, which children allegedly possess include spontaneity, abundance of energy, physicality, lack of self-consciousness, being forgiving and open



Monday 24th July 1972

mummy's gone to Cambridge.
Don't miss her. Another living day.
Felt like a real mother. Felt nervous of mummy. Kate's Diary.

Yet many children, even at an early age, are repressed, inhibited and wary, and in practice adults often don't appreciate the positive qualities. They say children are noisy, too boisterous and pose awkward questions. Nonetheless, why is this set of characteristics seen as incompatible with adulthood? Why are they threatening?

Many cultures build on the strengths and attributes of each successive period of life. For them, putting away childish things would be anti-social, as it would be for the elderly to be devalued and cast aside. The elderly in western society are treated similarly to children: patronised, marginalised in 'homes', seen as intellectually deficient and burdensome, their feelings and opinions not to be taken seriously. Their skills, experience and knowledge of the past afford them no privilege.

By putting into question the categories adult and child we would open up new possibilities for each of us. If we accept that human characteristics cannot be ordered via age and that human identity is far more fluid and variable than the categories admit, we need to look at what maintains the social ordering of age. Difference need neither be denied or used as a prop for inequality.

12 GHETTO - IZED

GETTING AROUND

Our physical environment is constructed, by and large, to meet the needs of the 'average' sized, able-bodied adult (usually male). Those who are elderly, disabled, or considerably slower, shorter, less strong than this 'average', experience, to varying degrees, problems of mobility, access and usage.

Children, and particularly small children experience all of these. Urban centres, where most of us live, are dominated by traffic which makes it impossible for young children to go outside in the street, unaccompanied, and dangerous for older ones who often have no other place to play and congregate. Use of buses and underground is restrictive because of the size of steps, the height of ticket counters, and the crush of crowds in rush hours.

If there is no garden where a small child lives, then she/he is a prisoner inside, unless an adult takes her/him out. It is the way transport and cities are organized which forces children to depend unduly on adults, in order to get around, not some inherent attribute of children to travel known routes.



MADE TO WHOSE MEASURE?

Access problems are numerous for pre-adolescent children. Vere children permitted or able to get around in public, they would find the counter heights of most service points a problem: in post offices, bars, banks, self-service restaurants, supermarkets. Or when purchasing goods, many would be out of reach. Toilets and sinks in public places are adult size. In cinemas and theatres, no

provision is made for those whose vision is blocked by those of 'average' height.

At home the problems continue. In the kitchen the counters, cupboards, stove and fridge are all too tall. For children interested in cooking this is discouraging. Even where they are permitted to cook, standing on chairs is precarious and inadequate. As well, baths, toilets and sinks are problematic as is the height of light switches, window latches, and most shelving. Furnishings, especially tables and chairs, are extremely frustrating. Both at home and in public, little if any provision is made for small people.

Size is also a factor in the use of tools and implements. These again are designed for use by 'Mr Average'. They include kitchen utensils and pots, household appliances, tools for all manual skills, for gardening, for bicycle repairs and so on. It is, for example, practically impossible to find a hammer which is the correct size and weight for a child who is under 10 years of age. The hammers and other 'tools' made for children are flimsy, ineffectual and not heavy enough.

Clearly, like most toys, they were never meant for 'practical use'. If a hammer is so hard to find, then anything more complex is in the realm of the impossible, unless of course, adults decide that children need a certain item. This is the case with violins which can be purchased as small as 1/16 of the 'normal' size. But then of course, it also takes money to buy one...

After receiving money from both of her parents she wrote 'It was my wit that gained me this money for I wrote verses to them both'

Elizabeth Wymeth Diary 1791

YAKETY-YAK :

TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN

There's a lot which is said and written about children. It has the quality of speaking about someone who is not there, or worse, someone who is there, but has no voice. Looking at the subject catalogue in a library reveals the magnitude of this speaking about. Experts in a variety of fields have developed theories: psychology, paediatrics, education, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, criminology, linguistics, sociology and so on. The production of these treatises began in the last 300 years and increased dramatically in this century. Previously, writings about children concerned religious and moral instruction, advice on discipline and the appropriate relationship between parents/teachers and children. For example:

'Just as soon as children develop awareness, it is essential to demonstrate to them by word and deed that they must submit to the will of their parents. Obedience requires children to (1) willingly do as they are told, (2) willingly refrain from doing what is forbidden, and (3) accept the rules made for their sake.'

J. Sulzer (1791)

Such manuals are of course still being produced. Their approach varies from the overtly disciplinarian to the subtly manipulative, but the intent is similar: to mould children in a desired image.

PARENTING begins with that wonderful moment when you first hold your baby. It is then that the educational process starts. That moment when the child looks up at you and you smile. Make an impression. In the early months and years, he is the most impressionable and receptive. He is the most malleable. Make the most of this, and you will have a child who is what you want him to be.

'They open and close you, And they act like they know you They don't know you They're friends and they're foes too'

Doni Mitchell



The manipulative skills of 4- and 5-year-olds need toys that stimulate their coordination and mental abilities.

The effect of the theories is rather different. They propose to talk about what a child is: to observe, describe, dissect, to uncover processes of development, of interaction with the environment. They have also developed concepts of abnormality and deviancy, disorder and the exceptional. Not only do they suggest that there are truths about children which can be known, but they also establish these 'truths' as standards, as signposts of desirable behaviour.

The methods employed by researchers include for example: observation of children through one-way mirrors, without their knowledge, or engaging them in conversations, experiments, and activities from which 'knowledge' can be gleaned. How many researchers question current assumptions about children? Or consider the ethics of their methodology? Far from being neutral and objective, as the scientific approach claims, these investigations are prescriptive and value-laden. Imagine how novel it would be to read and hear children's thoughts and opinions not only about themselves, but about adults as well.

MONEY

Having money is necessary in order to participate in most social activities. Going to restaurants, movies, musical events and many sporting facilities all require cash, not to mention paying for transportation. For young people who can get about by themselves, their options are severely limited by lack of money. Teenagers congregate in shopping malls, on street corners and arcades because these are their options.

Stores which prohibit access to children or limit their numbers at any given time, do so, presumably because children have a reputation as shoplifters. This isn't surprising. Given their limited access to money. As well, the desirability of material goods is incessantly promoted by all the media; acquiring possessions holds out the 'promise' of happiness, status and success. But, the fact is, all age groups shoplift; only children are singled out. If their were a bill of rights in this country, such bigotry could be legally contested, providing of course, that age were included as a category of discrimination.

Although it is just such impediments which prevent children from doing a variety of things for themselves, from being more independent, this is not how it is understood. Reality is inverted; it is children who are incapable and unskilled. Then the assumption is realised since, having little or no opportunity to acquire skills and independence, children become incapable and must constantly turn to adults when they want things done, when they need money.

The marvellous potential to absorb information and master skills which young people exhibit is wasted. Adults get irritated, feel trapped and burdened by demands. Children develop ways to get what they want: whining, cajoling, crying, manipulating, etc. This is the inevitable lot of those whose access to the world is mediated by another.



Grocer kills three boys suspected of stealing

By The Press
It is believed that a man who has been charged with the murder of three boys, aged 12, 13 and 14, who were found dead in a park near the city of London, is a grocer who has been suspected of stealing from his shop. The grocer, who is named as John Smith, is a 45-year-old man who has been charged with the murder of the three boys. The boys were found dead in a park near the city of London, and the grocer is believed to have been the last person seen with them. The grocer is a well-known figure in the community, and his name has been mentioned in connection with the case. The police are currently investigating the case, and it is hoped that more information will be available in the near future.



LETTERS

Dear Sir,
I have just read your article on the topic of 'The Role of the Mother' and I am very interested in it. I am a mother of three children and I often find myself in a similar position to the one you describe. I am sure that many other mothers will also find your article helpful and interesting. I am sure that you will be pleased to hear that I am a mother of three children and I often find myself in a similar position to the one you describe. I am sure that you will be pleased to hear that I am a mother of three children and I often find myself in a similar position to the one you describe.



LESBIAN MUMS RULE OK

By The Press
A group of lesbian mothers have been successful in their campaign to have their children's education and upbringing recognized as a valid and acceptable lifestyle. The group, known as the Lesbian Mothers' Association, has been fighting for years to ensure that their children are not stigmatized or discriminated against. They have achieved this by organizing protests, lobbying government officials, and raising public awareness. The group's efforts have been rewarded with a decision from the courts that recognizes the rights of lesbian mothers to raise their children in a loving and stable environment. This is a significant victory for the group and a step towards greater equality for all families.

24 Despite the fact that women's role in child care is manifestly unfair, that very often, mothers have little say in what happens to children (eg. sending them to school, the social pressures to raise obedient children), women constitute the primary social controllers of children during the first 5 years of life. For the woman, motherhood is a site of power and for many the only site. From a child's perspective, mothers are powerful and can inflict pain, humiliation and denial. They also encourage 'good' behaviour and attempt to shape children in 'desirable' ways.

On the other hand the limitations of this power can be seen, when mothers fly in the face of convention, allow their children 'too much' freedom, or take their side in disputes with authorities. Mothers, particularly those who are working class, black, lesbian or belong to an ethnic minority, are often afraid of their children being taken away if their 'child-rearing' practices are unorthodox.

Hurd allows teenage mother to keep baby son with her in Holloway

By The Press
A teenage mother has been allowed to keep her baby son with her in Holloway, a decision that has been hailed as a victory for the rights of young mothers. The mother, who is named as Jane Smith, is a 17-year-old girl who has been struggling to care for her baby son on her own. She has been facing many difficulties, including financial problems and a lack of support from her family. The decision to allow her to keep her baby son with her is a significant step towards recognizing the rights of young mothers and ensuring that they are able to care for their children in a loving and stable environment. This decision is a testament to the resilience and strength of young mothers and a step towards greater equality for all families.



» Authority and Control

PARENT POWER

The word 'authority' may well have its origins in procreation. It derives from the word "author" which means, amongst other things, the person who "originates or gives existence to anything", "one who begets, or investigates", "one who begets, a father or ancestor" (Oxford English Dictionary). From this we can see that authority meaning "the power to enforce obedience, the right to command, delegated power" resides in persons who act, initiate, procreate.

So it is that the parent-child relationship is one of the few, if only, areas where authority is still considered to be 'natural' and not contractual. To give life to a new human being also confers considerable power over them. This is confirmed, both legally and socially, as being just and proper. Children are effectively their parent's possessions until they reach majority.

The potential power of parents includes: determining where children live, what they eat, what they wear, their general appearance, choice of schools, where children go outside of school. They can punish physically, verbally, by withdrawal of privileges, or confinement in bedrooms. They determine pocket money, usually as a favour, and can control money which children earn or inherit. They can infringe on children's privacy, prohibit friendships and sexual experience.



Brazilians held over baby-sale plot



They can prevent children living elsewhere, and get the police to bring them back, if they run away. They can label children as delinquents or problem children and force psychiatric or therapeutic solutions, or confinement in children's "homes". They can foster out when they can't cope and take children back when they feel ready, even after years of absence.

When a runaway child goes to a sympathetic adult, that adult can be charged with kidnapping. Children who run away from home and refuse the punitive alternative of children's homes are forced to live on the streets, where they can be victimised by an array of other exploitative adults. Many of these children end up addicted to drugs or dead, yet it is illegal for them to seek out someone they trust.

Unnecessary force - prosecution P-C grabbed and kicked me, says boy



ALTERNATIVES?

None of which addresses the question of why women are overwhelmingly responsible for children. Why family life is usually organised to produce absent fathers (either at work or simply not there), or why indeed the ideal home life is the nuclear family. Obviously, I do not have the space to address these issues here.

One of the demands of the women's movement has been for men to become more active in childcare in order to equalise the imbalance, and to place men in caring roles. The traditional role for fathers has been that of 'head of household', exercising power over women as well as definition of fathering, which is analogous to mothering. Which is change the status of children within families or challenge the relationship between adults and children.



This is also true of collective facilities such as day care centres and after school programmes. Improving and expanding this public sector, need for paid employment, legitimate to pursue their own interests while they do facilitate contact between children and provide spaces outside the home, they do not, in the long term, counteract children's marginalisation, nor afford children more control over their lives.

When I worked in a parent cooperative day care, attempts by workers to integrate children into the decision making were perceived by some parents as were not "learning anything". Later, while doing a survey of daycare policies, I asked other workers whether, I asked other centres, in the running of their was simply incomprehensible or ludicrous. Some workers referred me to the pedagogical guidelines of the centre. This was the only framework in which they could understand a question about children's role.



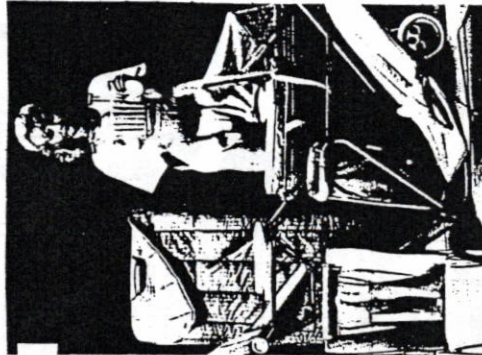
Women are without question the primary carers of children in our society. They bear the brunt of this responsibility and yet the resources and assistance available to them are pitiful. Mothering is a social concept; what is expected of 'good' mothers varies historically, culturally and between social classes. Since world war 2 there has been a proliferation of books on child development, psychology and care which cite the mother's role as crucially important. The majority of this literature has been written by male 'experts' who describe children and identify their 'needs', along with the role of mothers. Mothers are expected to respond to their child's every need be it emotional, physical or intellectual.

Clearly, the greater children's autonomy, the less work for mothers. This can be witnessed where children have relationships with other adults, who are also 'responsible' for them, or where children have access to safe outdoor spaces. In societies where children work and care for younger children, they quickly become co-workers of mothers and fathers. It is only recently, in the west, that mothering has been conceived as full time job.



Endless mothering

THOUSANDS of persons will
be made. Mothering Sunday
is gift of pure violence
breaking to land, and earth with
- - - - -



Previously, other social tasks for women, such as farming, paid employment, cooking and sewing, to name a few occupied the bulk of her time. Children participated at their own level or later were occupied at some employment. None of which is meant to recommend a life of perpetual work, but to point out how varied can be the content of mothering.

STATE INTERVENTION

Parental authority is also transferable to guardians, teachers, and in the case of state intervention, to the courts and their agents, eg. social workers. Although it is a sense true that the welfare state weakens parental authority, it can also be seen as an extension of it. The state intervenes when parental authority is seen to break down or be inadequate, or when parental care is thought to be lacking. Thus welfare institutions provide continuity and validation for the idea of authority. Since care is perceived as 'knowing what is best for children' or 'acting in their best interests', it is not incompatible with authority.

Furthermore, state intervention is normally more systematic and total. The levels of surveillance, in children's homes far exceed those possible within the family. Children who are placed in homes because of parental violence or neglect, are in effect punished for their own victimization. Victims of sexual abuse by fathers, usually girls, are regularly removed from their homes and placed in institutions.

**ADOPTIVE PARENT WANTED
FOR JOHN**

[illegible]

OBEDIENCE

Obedience is the flip side of authority, its complement. Obedience is what is expected from children. In no other inter-human relationship is this assumption so uncontested. The 'good' child means the compliant and obiding one. Thus, virtue for children is linked to obedience rather than active qualities such as initiative or compassion.

This early training continues to be of relevance in later years, and may explain why adults themselves are obedient in the face of a multitude of authority figures. Obedience is not an act to be shrugged off, but a state of mind. It serves to invalidate individual desires and opinions, and to generate guilt. As well it arouses the fear that we might lose the love and approval of those we love and on whom we depend. As children we

internalize the values of adult figures and these remain with us. When adults speak of the "need for discipline" their voices often seem to be coming from somewhere else. When asked why discipline is so necessary they give cliché responses like "Children would run wild" or "they must respect their elders".

"If an adult has not developed a mind of his own, then he will find himself at the mercy of the authorities for better or worse, just as an infant finds itself at the mercy of its parents. Saying no to those more powerful will always seem too threatening to him."

A. Miller

**Prevention
is better
than care**

LEGITIMATE VIOLENCE

A child is being hit, insulted or dragged along in public. No one intervenes. Such assault is legal, so long as it is "within reason". It is in such situations that the condition of children as property and the power of adults stand out in stark relief. To treat another adult this way would be a criminal offence. It is in public that the privileged nature of children's lives is accentuated. They have no public identity since they are either directly under an adult's control, or assumed to be temporarily removed from it, e.g. school children at lunch time. The family, the school, the playground, the youth club: these are the places where children belong.

The family is meant to be a kind of sanctuary from the world, yet the statistics on violence within the family tell a different story.

DANGEROUS DESIRES

like it. No one should force her. I know a girl who wasn't thinking about having it, then she did it and then had an abortion. I'd only have sex in a very steady relationship and then he's there to help you if you get pregnant.

in but I just wish that society would accept why do they think it's a crime to love 24 hours a day in bed. Why?" (Ago 18)

"I am very happy being a lesbian but I just wish that society would accept us and gay men. I mean, honestly, why do they think it's a crime to love someone? They think we spend 24 hours a day in bed. Why?" (Age 18).

A technique developed in the US to help children combat sexual abuse, encourages them to say no to unwanted touching etc from adults. While in itself a good idea, it doesn't explore the very reasons why children don't say no in the first place or indeed how, for instance, a child can say no to their father or family friend. Nor does it raise the issue of children's desire, be it for other children, or for adults.

It is permissible to talk about sex with young children, when it concerns unwanted sex, but not to discuss *their* desires. Sexuality is perceived as dangerous for children, if they are or are seen to be at risk from 'predatory' adults, and yet disturbing, when they manifest interest in or curiosity about it. The sexuality of teenagers is particularly threatening: a force to be contained and channelled until the 'appropriate' time. Often adults talk as though teenagers need to be protected from their own desires.

Postman Pat halts
playhouse sex game

Tracey Penning 14
think it's stupid, if a girl wants to do something—sex, right—she should make up her own mind.

Gillick case opens in appeal to Lords

had sex but if I did and I told my mum, I'd never
wouldn't be alive.

Michelle DeVries 17
I'm a rapper, my stage name is Michelle DeVries. I want to be a member of the Family Circle. I think I can do it really well. I have money and I want to be a member of the Family Circle. I want to be a member of the Family Circle. I want to be a member of the Family Circle.

The reasons for this are many, but central to this process, was a concept of the child which had been developing amongst the middle and upper classes for some time. Children were innocent,

vulnerable and easily corruptible, so they needed to be sheltered from the evil world until they were old enough to resist its temptations. They were the "little angels in the house", a diversion for world weary fathers, and certainly had nothing to do with the dirty business of earning money.

This stereotypical Victorian view of children's 'nature' contrasted absurdly with the reality of working class children's experience: in factories, on the streets, in agricultural work, in the pornography and prostitution industries.

PROTECTION VERSUS SELF RELIANCE

Protection is never neutral, disinterested or without negative consequences. Sheltering children from the world has made them totally financially dependent on parents. The daily regime in school reproduces factory discipline . Their bodies, their time and their intellects are monitored by bells, confinement to desks, by exams, grades and punishments, and by teacher surveillance.

**Women
jeer
Leoni**

Angels have their problems

BUMS: The Pope said yesterday that angels do exist but have been misunderstood throughout history.

Other institutions have arisen to contain those who do not adapt in home or school. With each new outburst of rebellion, there is a cry for more discipline, more specialists. With each new act of brutality against children, which comes to light in the press, there is a cry for more protection, more intervention. Is it not time, while keeping in mind the very real vulnerability of children in the current system, to call into question the idea of protection? To ask what has it protected?

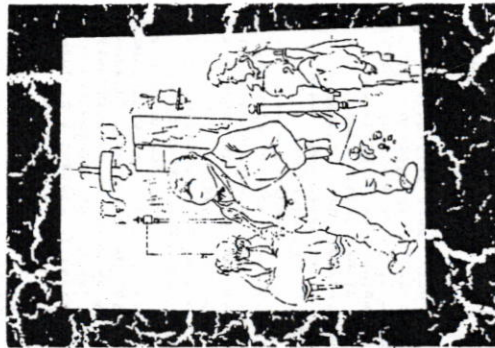
If by protecting children we are making them more dependent and vulnerable to exploitation, then this is not only counter-productive, but hypocritical. When adults think of protecting children, it is always against the danger "out there", against other adults since they themselves know "what is best". We seem incapable of realising that a protector can also be an abuser, a person who does not respect a child's integrity or wishes - in short, any adult, be they parent, teacher, stranger or youth worker.

Real protection is self protection. Adults need to work with children to confront dangers and problems, to examine what resources and rights children need in order to be stronger and more independent. And, adults need to look at how they benefit from children's dependency.

Old 'need protection by law like young'

It would seem that too much is expected from the nuclear family; small and isolated, it is nonetheless, expected to provide for the emotional and sexual needs of its members as well as the necessities i.e. food, shelter etc. Within the family adults can and do control children via a range of emotional, physical, economic and sexual coercions. The intervention of state protectors in extreme cases and the very category of abuse itself as exceptional or distinct, camouflages the abusive nature of adult power.

adult power. In other areas of life this power can be named: tyrannical, arbitrary, manipulative. Yet we often hear children described as tyrants and manipulators. Is it really possible to believe that a child, dependent in so many ways on adults can in fact tyrannise them? Children appear to get what they want by manipulating their subordinate status eg by tantrums and rebellion. But they usually pay for these 'victories' by feeling guilty or suffering adult resentment.



THE PRICE OF 'RESPECT'

To whom can children speak of their pain and suffering, when everything legitimates adult authority, and they fear the loss of adult love and approval? Children not only tolerate an enormous amount from adults, but often assume the blame for their own victimisation. In such a state of isolation they become cut off from feelings of rage, hurt and humiliation. Later as adults they may remember the mistreatment, but are incapable of invoking the feelings.

Thus many adults can laughingly recall incidents which were anything but funny. This doesn't mean that the hurt feelings have vanished; on the contrary, they surface in the need to control and punish children, in a vain attempt to compensate. Children must respect adults, *regardless*, because adults were not respected as children.



Don't Interrupt!

Take the interview down!
 Yes, of your dream!
 Sit up!
 Don't miss a foot of yourself!
 Remember your name!
 Respect your ideas!
 I can't put you up with anyone!
 Go outside.
 Don't go to bed!
 Don't go to work!
 Don't forget to wash your teeth!
 Don't forget to polish your shoes!
 Don't forget to brush your hair!
 Here we are!
 Don't interrupt when I'm talking!
 Put your hand over your mouth while I'm talking!
 Don't forget to look at the floor!
 You spend too much money!
 No more pocket money for you do you!
 Go to your room!
 Go to your room!
 Don't interrupt with sweets!
 Don't go use the telephone.
 You are not coming and until you are not coming!
 Don't interrupt when I'm talking!
 You are not coming and until you are not coming!
 Always carry a pen to school.
 Eat your dinner up.
 Wear your school uniform!
 Don't forget to wash your teeth!
 Come straight home tomorrow.
 Come straight home tomorrow.
 Tidy your bed.
 Don't interrupt my conversation.
 Don't interrupt my conversation.
 Don't look at the wall!
 Don't look at the wall!
 Don't touch your throat!
 Don't touch your throat!
 You never listen to a word I say!
 Don't interrupt when I'm talking!

Domenico Vassallo

DEPENDENCY

MINORITY STATUS

All people under 16 are legal minors. The term itself is an apt description of children's status, meaning "the lesser of two things, species etc.": comparatively small or unimportant; not to be reckoned amongst the greater or principal individuals of the kind." Being a minor is being less of a person, since you are deprived of a variety of rights and freedoms which are available to major persons.

You cannot live where you want or without parent/guardian; you cannot enter into legal contracts or vote. You cannot hold public office or be protected by minimum wage laws. Under sixteen you cannot work full time, drive or drink, marry, leave school, attend certain films or engage in heterosexual relations. The age of consent for homosexuality is 21. Lesbianism is not subject to legislation under British law.

A minor can be legally assaulted by parents, guardians and teachers. The power of parents can extend, as previously mentioned into a variety of non legal areas like appearance, friendships, privacy, daily decision making and so on. The sum total of these sanctions result in incredibly galling and artificial limitations for minors, particularly teenagers, and heavy responsibilities for adults.

In theory minors are 'not responsible', although they they can be held criminally responsible at 10, and should they fall foul of adults, they can be subjected to long spells of incarceration in borstals, homes and psychiatric units. Becoming pregnant, being an incest victim or battered child, skipping school, running away, lesbianism/homosexuality are some of the many reasons why minors are institutionalised. These are heavy prices to pay for one's 'lack of responsibility'.

Shortly after presentation to the camp the child is given a first name decided on by family and friends together from the moment of naming onward, the child is treated as a full person with individual rights.

C. Turnbull on the Mbuti People

Over-16s 'need consent law change'

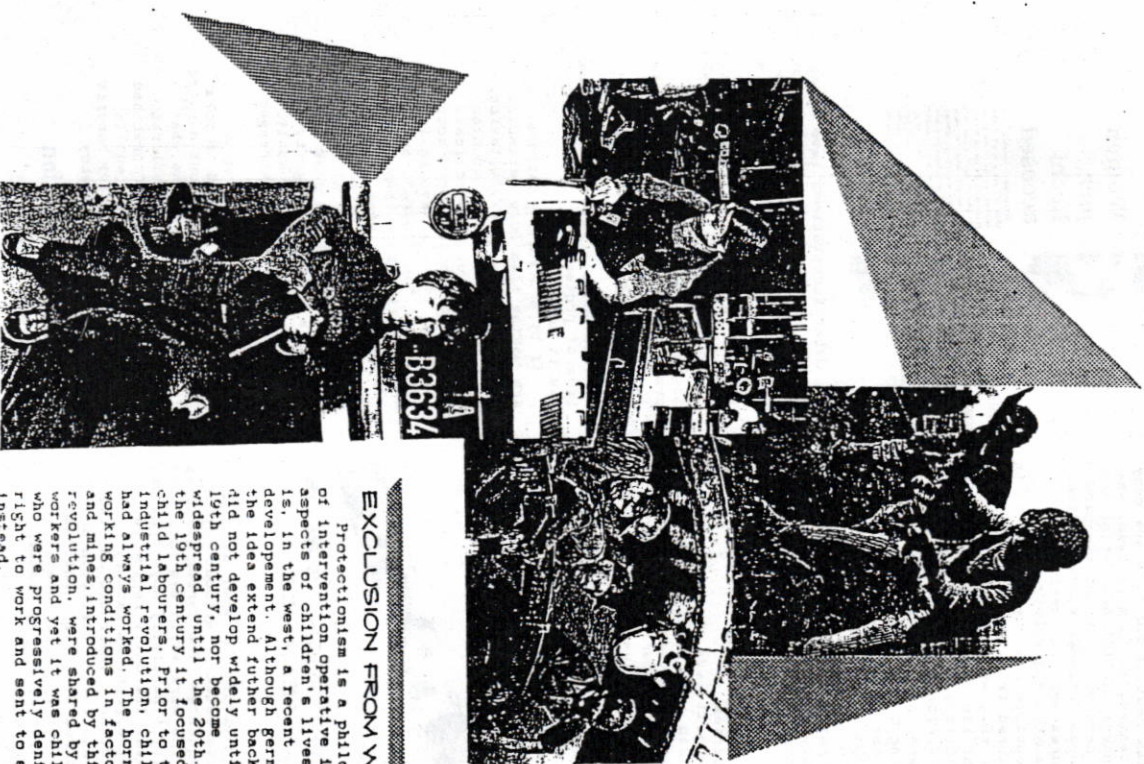
Pay protection to go for

500,000 young workers

ADULTS AS PROTECTORS

The idea that adults "know what is best" for young people and that young people must be protected is neither universal, nor historically constant. In many third world countries, where children's labour is essential to family survival, no one doubts their ability to perform a variety of tasks and to be responsible. In Naples, you can see children as young as 6 working competently as painters, mechanics, etc. and zooming around on mopeds.

Is it their independence and self-reliance which is the 'problem' or their lack of resources and opportunities due to poverty race or gender? It is common for adults to equate children's independence with deprivation. Replacing autonomy, no matter how relative, with dependency, is not progressive, but it does satisfy adult needs and to see children as helpless and needy. Is there an adult reading this who would deny that they feel gratified every time a child turns to them for help or protection, or asks for money, or permission to do something?



EXCLUSION FROM WORK

Protectionism is a philosophy of intervention operative in most aspects of children's lives. It is, in the west, a recent development. Although germs of the idea extend further back, it did not develop widely until the 19th century, nor become widespread until the 20th. In the 19th century it focused on child labourers. Prior to the industrial revolution, children had always worked. The horrific working conditions in factories and mines, introduced by this revolution, were shared by all workers and yet it was children who were progressively denied the right to work and sent to school instead.